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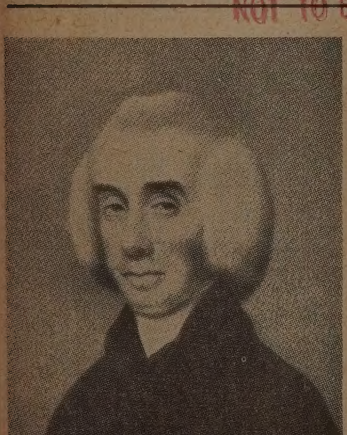

THEOPHILUS LINDSEY

By H. Lismer Short, M.A.

This month we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the death of Theophilus Lindsey, which occurred on November 3rd, 1808 at his house in Essex Street, London, in the 85th year of his age. He is a very important person in our Unitarian history, for several reasons, some of which are well-known, while others are only now coming to light.

Every Unitarian knows that Lindsey was an Anglican clergyman, Rector of Catterick in Yorkshire, who took part in a campaign, led by his father-in-law, Archdeacon Blackburne, to broaden the terms of clerical subscription in the Church of England; that is, to change the law by which every clergyman, on appointment to a benefice, was compelled to declare his assent to every detail of the Thirty-nine Articles. These Articles had been drawn up in the 16th century, reflecting the theology of that age, and 200 years later, after Isaac Newton and the beginnings of modern science, many educated men could no longer whole-heartedly accept them. A petition was presented to parliament in 1772, pleading for a change in the law; but it was rejected. Most other clergymen who had signed the petition merely swallowed their disappointment and stayed where they were; but Lindsey felt that in conscience he must resign. It was a brave act, for he was 50 years of age and a married man.

He sold his furniture and part of his library, and moved to London, where for a time his circumstances were difficult. Some Presbyterian (i.e. Liberal Nonconformist, soon to be called Unitarian) congregations invited him to become their minister; but he had not left the Church of England merely to become a Nonconformist. He still wanted to reform the Church of England. So his friends helped him to found a chapel in Essex Street, London, where he could conduct Anglican worship according to a reformed version of the Book of Common Prayer. He called his chapel "Unitarian," and it was the first congregation officially bearing the name. Though his friends included Dr. Priestley, Dr. Price and other Liberal Nonconformists, his hope was to attract Anglicans to a more

rational faith. Some Anglicans did in fact join him; Dr. John Disney, his brother-in-law, resigned from the Church of England to become his assistant and successor, and a number of distinguished Anglicans, including the Duke of Grafton, were to be seen in the congregation. But the response from the Church of England was not great, and soon Essex Street Chapel was counted as part of Liberal Nonconformity. Indeed it became, although a newcomer, the centre of that group of congregations which, under the name of Presbyterian, traced their ancestry back to the moderate Puritans of the 17th century. They adopted Essex Street Chapel's Unitarian name. To-day our new Essex Hall, our administrative headquarters, stands on the site of Lindsey's chapel, and our denominational publishing house is called the Lindsey Press.

We rightly honour Theophilus Lindsey as a heroic pioneer of our faith, and the story as I have told it is well-known among us. What is not fully recognised is the unexpected bias that Lindsey gave to our historical development. His adoption, for example, of a reformed Anglican liturgy influenced our forms of worship, so that to this day not only does the eighth service in *Orders of Worship* consist entirely of material from the Anglican prayer book, but all the services in our book follow the Anglican pattern. In the 19th century many Unitarians drew away from the other Nonconformist sects towards greater sympathy for Anglicanism; for example, they were the first Nonconformists to build their churches with altars, spires and stained-glass windows, and they looked for friends among the Liberal Anglicans.

It is true that Lindsey was almost alone in leaving the Church of England to try to set up a reformed Anglican congregation; but a recent American historian has pointed out that he was in fact part of a notable exodus from Anglicanism at that time, and many of these former Anglicans were his friends. They were nearly all Cambridge men, and they took a prominent part in reforming politics and literature. Lindsey had been a fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, as Disney was of Peterhouse. The Duke of Grafton was chancellor of the university. John Jebb, also of Peterhouse and an ex-clergyman, helped Lindsey to found Essex Street Chapel, and Gilbert Wakefield, of Jesus College, also an ex-clergyman, made a new translation of the Bible for it. William Frend, of Jesus College, was expelled for a pamphlet advocating Unitarianism. James Losh, of Trinity, Wordsworth's friend, became a Unitarian, a radical and a member of the congregation at Newcastle-on-Tyne, and Thomas Fyshe Palmer, of Queens', a Unitarian and a political radical, was condemned to transportation to Australia as a convict. The influence of such men, who were Anglicans and not of the old Puritan stock, upon our history has yet to be assessed.

MANCHESTER DISTRICT WOMEN'S LEAGUE produced a historical pageant at Monton on October 11th to celebrate the Jubilee of the League. Over 400 attended.

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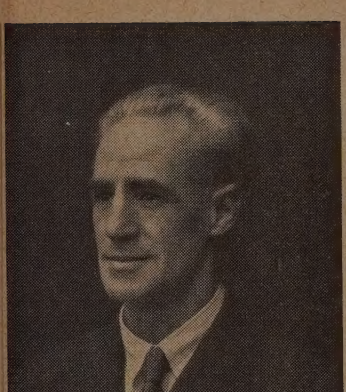

THESE ARE UNITARIANS

No. 9. E. G. Lee.
Editor of "The Inquirer."
By John Rowland

Ernest George Lee, Editor of the "Inquirer" since 1939, is perhaps typical of the minister-journalists who have maintained the oldest weekly dissenting journal in England over its 125 years of life. He has in recent years combined this work with the charge of a lively little Church at Brixton, and has at the same time made a name as a writer of theological discussions and of some striking novels, both historical and modern.

Born at Exeter in 1896, and educated at the University College of the south-west (now the University of Exeter) and at Manchester College, Oxford, Mr. Lee's first charge was at Halliwell Road, Bolton, from 1928 to 1933; he then transferred to Shrewsbury, where he was minister until 1939, when he came to London to take charge of the "Inquirer." His ministry at Brixton began in 1943.

Mr. Lee has never had any unduly high opinion of his non-theological writing and it was perhaps typical of his modesty that his first novel, a picture of the modern world, was published under a *nom-de-plume*. This was The *Fleshly Screen*, by Edward Dodge, which appeared in 1937, and was widely praised by the reviewers. Later, when he turned to writing historical fiction, he succeeded in producing original pictures and in peopling the ancient scene with living characters, in *Between the Gates* and *The Beginning*, both of which were published in 1955.

His theological writings have, for the most part, consisted of commentary on the changing times, relating Christian belief and doctrine to some of the political and social issues of the day. *Christianity in Chains* was his first book of this kind, which might have attracted more attention if it had not appeared just at the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. This study of religion in a modern setting might, if more had considered it, have had some influence on the social dilemmas of 1939-45; at any rate, he took the argument a stage further in 1945, when his *Mass Man and Religion* was published—a discussion of the rôle of religion in a world which seemed to be tending more and more towards totalitarian ideas, even though the defeat of Hitler might have been thought to have ended the totalitarian attack. His book, indeed, faced in religious terms the position which George Orwell's *1984* faced politically.

Mr. Lee's most striking book on religion, however, was to come later and to be widely noticed. This was *Christianity and the New Situation*, published in 1953, in which the author deliberately stated his

belief that Christianity still had a message in the changing background of the welfare state. He has also written some booklets for the Lindsey Press, notably *Christianity and Sex Morality* and *C. S. Lewis and Some Modern Theologians*, the latter, perhaps, his only published work of pure theological thinking.

What, in fact, has most characterised Mr. Lee's religious writing has been his feeling, more or less implicit in his novels too, that religion cannot be divorced from life, but that there must always be an interplay of religious ideas and social ideals. This is what has rendered his Editorship of the "Inquirer" so noteworthy, for his front-page leading articles week by week, usually discussing some issue of current importance, have ranged far and wide, and have interested many readers far outside the ranks of acknowledged Unitarians.

The writing which he has done would be enough to keep most men busy; but Mr. Lee has found time to preach, even while Editor of the "Inquirer," not only at his own Church at Brixton, but widely in London and the south-east, and occasionally further afield; he has given papers to the Old Students' Association of Manchester College, Oxford; this year he preached the sermon—an unusually stimulating and thought-provoking one—at the end-of-session proceedings at the Unitarian College, Manchester; and his unusual approach, with its mixture of practicality and a feeling for the value of symbolism in religion, always makes his addresses distinctive affairs, which could not be delivered by any other minister of the day.

The Unitarian ministry has attracted many and varied characters; but of all those on the ministerial roll in 1958 there can be none more outstanding in ability or in achievement than E. G. Lee.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

The Mayor and young Sid

The Mayor was definite, "I absolutely refuse to ask the Duchess to open the bazaar, you ask her!"

The bazaar committee pleaded; but he was firm. Later, however, the Duchess wrote, offering her personal but unofficial support for the bazaar; which meant that they had to look elsewhere. They did—and was no further than the Mayor!

"Why me?" he inquired, alarmed.

"Because you are the chief citizen and you are supposed to do things like this," they said. "That's what you're there for." And that settled that.

On the day, the sun shone brightly, and plenty were there for the opening. They included a certain small boy known as young Sid and five of his "gang." When the Mayor saw them he quailed visibly. Only a week before he had had cause to chastise young Sid severely. And now, he didn't like the look in Sid's eye or the peashooter in his hand.

He said he felt ill and could not continue; but the committee gave him some water and sat him down for a while. Then he said he had just remembered a pressing engagement; but they said *this* was *it* and was all he had for the afternoon. Then the Mayor gave up. During his speech Sid's gang, well hidden, shot a dozen peas at him. These pained the Mayor and puzzled everyone else, till he realised that he could really *do* something about it. He called to the men behind Sid and the gang and in a moment all were held fast. After the ceremony, it gave the Mayor much satisfaction to choose a suitable piece of wood and give them the whacking of their lives! He was a happy man for days!

"They're rehearsing a Christmas mortality play."

PRAYER FOR BOMB TESTS !

It is reported that the American programme of nuclear bomb tests was opened with the following prayer by a ship's chaplain:

"Unto us who are privileged to draw aside the curtain into the secrets of Thy Universe, teach us that our whole duty is to love Thee, Our God, and to keep Thy commandments."

However, Sidney J. Harris in the *Chicago Daily News* suggested a much more realistic prayer:

"Unto us who have the pride and the presumption to release the most devastating forces of nature, O Lord, be merciful. Protect us from cardiac contusion; preserve us from cerebral or coronary air embolism; guard us from the dreadful consequences of respiratory tract haemorrhage; allow us not to suffer from pulmonary oedema; save us from the trauma of distended hollow viscera; visit these catastrophes upon our enemies, not upon us, and we promise to love Thee and keep Thy commandments—all except one, O Lord."

The writer added: "The Lord, I am sure, would not grant this prayer, but it would not, at any rate, be an insult to his intelligence and an affront to his benevolence."

NEWS AND VIEWS

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The removal of headquarters from the temporary occupation (14 years) of Gordon Square to the rebuilt Essex Hall was completed at the end of September, and the official opening was held on October 25th, the day after the autumn meeting of the Council and the recognition service to new ministers which was held for the first time in London, at Highgate Church.

OVERSEAS

VANCOUVER branch of the Unitarian Service Committee, between the beginning of the year and the end of August, shipped 27,520 lbs. of clothing to Korea, and 3,327 lbs. of layettes to the Middle East. The Church School is increasing as the Church membership increases, and two school sessions are now held on a Sunday. Experimental evening services are now being held on the first Wednesday and the third Sunday each month, designed for those who cannot attend on a Sunday morning. Sermons will be followed by discussion.

HOME CHURCHES

BRADFORD. Broadway Avenue's summer garden party this year went off in glorious weather, one hundred people attended, and a profit of £20 was achieved. Square dancing by eight Sunday School girls was a great attraction.

CHELTENHAM Harvest Service was an all-present service which also marked the first anniversary of the Rev. J. M. Quirk. A harvest supper and bring-and-buy sale was held the following Wednesday.

DONCASTER. Well attended farewell services to the Rev. G. W. Parkinson were followed by a social, when Mr. Parkison was presented with a cheque, and many tributes were paid to his fearless and challenging ministry of 13 years, dur-

ing which church membership substantially increased and its influence in the town was considerably strengthened. The Sunday School presented a book token, and gifts to Marie and Evelyn Parkinson (aged 13 and 5). The Women's League, P.M.A. and Sewing Meeting each recognised Mrs. Parkinson's contribution, by presenting three gifts, a brooch and ear-rings, a tea set and cloth embroidered with the name of each Sewing Meeting member.

GLOUCESTER. Six students from the Cambridge Unitarian Church visited Gloucester during vacation and cleared the Church garden of the undergrowth of years; one student removed dry rot from the kitchen and replastered a wall, and the room is now ready for redecoration. The Rev. J. M. and Mrs. Quirk are taking a keen interest in the reclaiming of the garden.

HINCKLEY. The first open show held in Hinckley Great Meeting Schoolroom on September 20th, was a great success, and a total of £30 was raised. Flowers, fruit and vegetables were of a very high standard, and Mr. H. Howard, the judge, said it was one of the finest small shows he had judged. A miniature garden and wild flower section attracted adults as well as children. For the cake section there were 40 cakes on show.

IPSWICH. A recent sermon subject "Are women more belligerent than men?" challenged women to put forward their case if they think they could create a more peaceful world than men have succeeded in doing—considering that communities and institutions run entirely by women are not always models of peaceful co-existence.

LONDON DISTRICT. ILFORD Church has embarked on an attractive autumn programme of special addresses, advertised by a well-printed six page folder. The meetings are on Wednesdays as well as the Sunday services, and will continue to the middle of December. An All Faiths service in included in the series as well as week-night talks by a Buddhist and a Muslim.

LIVERPOOL. GATEACRE Chapel interior and School Hall exterior have been painted during the summer by Mr. A. Hesketh. The expense of this is to be met from the forthcoming Christmas Fair. A service of recognition to new members was held on October 5th. SPEKE Church has received notice that its meeting room, formerly the "letting office" of the Speke estate, is to be demolished by Liverpool Corporation next year, and this is not to be regretted considering the state of the structure, which is in no way adapted to Church needs. But it creates a serious problem for the congregation, which can find no other meeting room in Speke until the building scheme put forward by the Liverpool District Missionary Association is proceeded with. When the present room is vacated at the end of the year, it has been decided that the Speke congregation will hold evening services in Gateacre Chapel, since bus services are convenient, but the need for a church on the spot is very urgent. The congregation held a Sale of Work in the Gateacre School Hall on October 11th. The lunch-hour services at HOPE STREET Church are continuing on Tuesdays from 12.30 to 1.30, the first and last periods being organ recitals.

MANCHESTER. ALTRINCHAM and SALE united Unitarian Advance Campaign started on September 14th, with specially advertised services at both Churches, and a series of five Thursday evening meetings held alternatively in Altrincham and Sale. Not many outside enquiries have attended, though considerable notice has been taken of the meetings, and each one has

been stimulating and refreshing. The Manchester District Association joined forces for the last of the mid-week meetings held in the Stamford Hall, Altrincham, (the De Massey Room), when the Rev. R. W. Sorensen, M.P. came to speak on "The Unitarian Faith and a United World." BROOKFIELD Church, Gorton, held a School Graduation Day in September for transferring scholars to new departments. PENDLETON Young People's League, which has recently been revived, are taking their "Teen-age Revue" to Dukinfield on November 1st. A Harvest Supper on October 6th, followed the Harvest Services on the 5th, when the Rev. T. W. Roberts returned for the morning service, and the Rev. Tom Wardle preached in the evening. Mr. Wardle also preached at URMSTON that morning. The house adjoining Urmston Church came into the market recently, and has been bought by the M.D.A. as a possible manse, but the house is let for the meantime to two Church members. Work has continued on flooring the hut from Cross Street, which is to be the new Sunday School, and interior decoration is now being tackled. The congregation is supplying the workers on the job, and is doing its best to raise the money needed for completion of the project. SWINTON Church is raising a Centenary Fund of £1,000 for repairs and decoration of the Church, and a concert for this fund was given in October by the Irlams-o'th'-Height Orchestral Society.

TODMORTON Michaelmas Fair was held on October 18th, with the Women's League Annual Tea and Social Evening the following week. The League is planning to mark the Jubilee Year by making a gift to the Church, for which members are contributing.

UNITARIAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEAGUE. The Scottish Region marked its first anniversary by a Conference held in Dundee in September, when delegates from all four branches, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee, attended. A news-sheet is now sent out to branches, and it is hoped to make a regional film-strip. The National U.Y.P.L. Social Weekend at Great Hucklow was again well attended, and much appreciated.

"Sunday, day or rest or day of jest," was the title of an address by Keith Craney at a Youth Service at Sale on October 12th, arranged by South Lancs U.Y.P.L.

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STRONTIUM 90

We march with the dead,
We who are not yet born.
We march with the soldier dead
of every war.
They gave the light of life, but
we give more:
They gave life while it was theirs
to live,
We give life before it is ours to
give.
The low forehead, the dull eyes,
The gesture limp or wild—
Because you used as shield
The body and mind of a little
child.
The stunted trunk, the huge and
heavy idiot head;
A hundred thousand children
march with the dead.
We are the condemned.
Before we are proved guilty the
sentence is begun.
We, the prejudged innocents,
what have we done?
What have we done
To merit a prison of darkness all
our years?
What treachery, what crime have
we performed,
We, the idiot children, we the
deformed?
We are exposed and exploited
because of your fears,
Are we indeed being judged by
a jury of our peers?

Edith L. Pierce

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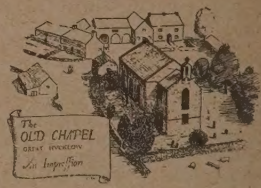
Northern S.S. Federation
UNITARIAN HOLIDAY HOMES



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